



SEVP InFocus April 2016 Webinar Script

Slide 1: Title Slide

MODERATOR:

- Hi everybody! My name is Lauren Caricato and I want to welcome you to SEVP's second InFocus webinar. Over the next hour, we'll discuss important program news and updates.
- I'll be moderating today's webinar, and am joined by Marissa Tinsley and Tandice Ghajar from the SEVP Strategic Communications Team.
- Marissa and Tandice, could you briefly introduce yourselves to our viewers?

Slide 2: Today's Presenters

MARISSA:

- My name is Marissa Tinsley and I started working at SEVP in 2010 in the School Certification Unit doing Initial certifications. I later transferred to my current position on the Strategic Communications Team, where I now work with Tandice.

TANDICE:

- Hi everyone, I am Tandice Ghajar and I'm also on the SEVP Strategic Communications Team. I used to work in SEVP's compliance unit and also did some policy-related work. My primary focus is student issues.

Slide 3: Presentation Overview

MODERATOR:

- Thanks for joining me today!
- First, I hope everyone took a moment to complete our poll. This information will help us know how many of you are watching today.
- I also have a few brief notes and reminders for everyone:



- You can open our **Hyperlink Appendix**, which contains links to all of the Web pages mentioned during this presentation.
- Finally, a **recording** of today's presentation and webinar script will be available in a few days on Study in the States – the same place you went to access this webinar. We'll notify you when this presentation is available through a Study in the States blog post and social media messages, so if any of your colleagues weren't able to join you today, let them know they can watch it next week!

Slide 4: The Latest News

MODERATOR:

- Now that we have those housekeeping notes out of the way, let's get to it!
- Let's start with the latest news from SEVP.
- Tandice, STEM OPT seems to be a hot topic, can you start with that?



Slide 5: Updated STEM OPT Regulation

TANDICE:

- Absolutely, Lauren!
- As I am sure many of our viewers are aware, DHS published the final STEM OPT regulation on March 11, 2016. The amended regulation will take effect on May 10.
- This new regulation not only helps U.S. colleges and universities remain globally competitive in attracting international students in STEM fields, but also strengthens the OPT program.
- It better ensures that practical training opportunities are designed to meet student needs, while also requiring greater accountability of employers and students.

MODERATOR:

- Yes and we've heard a lot about the Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students." Can you walk us through what the form is?

TANDICE:

- The short answer is that the Form I-983 is a formal training plan filled out by both the employer and student. It clearly articulates a STEM OPT student's learning objectives, and affirms the employer's commitment to helping the student achieve those objectives.
- Unfortunately, we don't have enough time during this webinar to comprehensively review the Form I-983, but we want to make our viewers aware that we have posted a new Form I-983 tutorial to the STEM OPT Hub on Study in the States. The tutorial provides step-by-step guidance for students and employers completing the form.
- We also discussed the Form I-983 during last Thursday's SEVP Special Report webinar about the new STEM OPT regulation.

MODERATOR:

- Yes, for our viewers who were unable to tune into last week's SEVP Special Report webinar about STEM OPT, a link to the recording is available on the Study in the States Stakeholder Webinars page. You can find the URL for the Stakeholder Webinars page in the Hyperlink Appendix.



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- The webinar not only discussed the new Form I-983, but also reviewed the transition plan and answered questions submitted by stakeholders.
 - Before we move on, one other thing I'd like to discuss regarding is the STEM OPT Hub on Study in the States. Could one of you tell us a little more about the Hub?



Slide 6: STEM OPT Hub

TANDICE:

- Of course, Lauren.
- The STEM OPT Hub is a fantastic, free online resource that Study in the States users can access. If you have questions about STEM OPT, you should definitely check out the Hub on Study in the States.
- There's a lot of good information that will answer some of the questions you may have about the new regulation.

MODERATOR:

- This is definitely a really useful tool for DSOs, students and employers alike. I just want to mention that we do have a link to the Hub on the Hyperlink Appendix that you can download directly from this webinar page.
- Ok, I think we've pretty much covered the basics of STEM OPT, especially since we have the STEM OPT webinar coming up in a couple of days.
- Another piece of recent news that we need to cover is that SEVP currently has draft guidance open for public comment on Study in the States. Tandice, can you talk to us about this guidance please?



Slide 7: Draft Guidance for Comment: Secondary Postgraduate Year Programs

TANDICE:

- The draft guidance, which we posted on March 21, 2016, addresses how a postgraduate year program of pre-collegiate study for recent high school graduates may or may not qualify for SEVP certification.
- These programs are also known as “Grade 13” programs.
- The draft guidance also specifies eligibility and program requirements specifying that public high schools are not eligible to include Grade 13 programs as part of a course of study for F-1 students.
- Remember, this guidance is not yet effective or in use since it is draft guidance.

MARISSA:

- We should also remind everyone that we do encourage you to submit comments on this guidance to SEVP. You can submit your comments to the email you see listed on your screen until Friday, May 6, 2016. When you send your comments, remember to list the title of the guidance in the email subject line. We thank you so much for your contributions and thoughts.



Slide 8: Notifications and Follow-Up

MODERATOR:

- Well thank you both for keeping us all informed about the latest news from SEVP – it's certainly appreciated! And as our viewers might have guessed, there is a link to the draft guidance for comment page in the Hyperlink Appendix.
- On the draft guidance for comment page, you can also sign up to receive email alerts from SEVP when new guidance is posted.
- Moving forward, let's discuss notifications and follow up information that SEVP has for its stakeholders.
- One important thing for both DSOs and international students to note is that SEVP is now terminating the SEVIS records of students who have failed to comply with Form I-515A submission requirements.
- Tandice, this sounds like a serious matter, could you tell us a little more about it?



Slide 9: Form I-515A Termination

TANDICE:

- Yes, Lauren, it's definitely something DSOs and students should take seriously.
- Remember, CBP will give students who enter the United States without all required documentation a Form I-515A at the port of entry.
- Students have 30 days upon receipt of the Form I-515A to send all paperwork listed on the form to SEVP. For students who have failed to do so in the time allotted, we are implementing additional measures to ensure compliance.
- Upon failure to return a completed Form I-515A with all required documentation or depart the United States within 30 days of receiving the form, SEVP sends a notice to students called "Intent to Terminate."
- This notice gives students an additional 14 days as of the date the letter is sent to respond to the Form I-515A.
- If, after this second opportunity to submit the documentation the student still fails to comply, SEVP will terminate the student's record in SEVIS.
- Additional information about the noncompliance termination procedure is available as a PDF on [ICE.gov/SEVP](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVP), and we definitely recommend that DSOs familiarize themselves with this procedure so students understand how to maintain their student status.

MODERATOR:

- And we've included a link to that PDF in the Hyperlink Appendix for easy reference. Speaking of SEVIS, Marissa, could you talk through our updates on what we can expect next in terms of enhancements?



Slide 10: SEVIS Enhancements

MARISSA:

- We have a couple of things coming up that will continue to improve SEVIS for our users, including two releases happening between now and June.
- The first release, planned for May 2016, will contain changes related to the STEM OPT regulation that we discussed earlier.
- It will adjust the current 17-month STEM OPT extension to 24 months, and provide a link that allows DSOs to process STEM OPT extensions on all post-completion OPT records.

MODERATOR:

- The Broadcast Message SEVP sent out to DSOs on April 6 further clarifies some information, so we definitely recommend that viewers take a look at that as well.
- Marissa, you mentioned we could expect two releases – can you tell us more about the second?

MARISSA:

- Absolutely, the second release is slated for June 2016 and will include some major changes including making improvements to the workflows that create the Form I-20, and updating student records to support these improvements.
- The release will also deploy functionality allowing DSOs to complete mass registration for continuing students in real time, as well as improvements to student lists and SEVIS alerts. We'll also introduce a new travel, visa and passport information page.
- Remember, we have SEVIS webinars before and after each release to demonstrate new features and answer stakeholder questions, so stay tuned to Broadcast Messages to find out when those pre- and post-release webinars will occur.

MODERATOR:

- We'll definitely keep an eye out for those Broadcast Messages. You can also check out a list of upcoming and past SEVIS webinars on the webinars section of the SEVIS Help Hub on Study in the States.
- Tandice, what else is going on with SEVP that our viewers should know about?



Slide 11: Around SEVP

TANDICE:

- A few things, actually – the first is that everyone should know that SEVP has begun emailing Remedial Action Plans. These are emailed letters to schools that have inaccurate SEVIS records for students, such as impossible birth dates, or education levels not listed on the school's Form I-17 in SEVIS. These letters will ask the school officials to correct the data in SEVIS.
- Remember, it's important to keep all student records up to date to ensure that both you and your students are compliant with federal regulations.
- Look for more information on this topic on Study in the States.

MODERATOR:

- Thanks Tandice – it's definitely important for folks to keep an eye out for those communications.
- So Marissa, we talked a lot about SEVP field representatives in our last webinar — do we have any news from the field?

MARISSA:

- We do, Lauren. As I'm sure DSOs are aware, we deployed the fourth and final class of field representatives in December 2015.
- However, we still have a few remaining vacancies in:
 - Arlington, Virginia,
 - San Jose, California, and
 - Kansas City, Kansas.
- We really hope to fill these positions soon, but in the meantime, DSOs and students in these areas should continue to contact the SRC for assistance.

MODERATOR:

- Yeah, I know a couple of those territories had a field representative for a little bit, but it's really important to note that if you are in any of those three territories, that you contact the SRC with your questions, issues, and whatnot.
- Marissa, just want to briefly check in on Form I-17 updates, do you have any news on that?



MARISSA:

- Yes! We do want to let our viewers know that we are currently processing Form I-17 updates that we received in July and August 2015.
- We do want to reiterate that the average time it takes to adjudicate a Form I-17 update is at least 60 days; however, this could take longer depending on the nature of the request.

MODERATOR:

- Speaking of school certification, I know that we've been working hard to process PDSO and DSO updates; can you guys give us a status update on that effort?



Slide 12: PDSO and DSO Updates

MARISSA:

- Sure, Lauren. We are very pleased to tell you all that SEVP eliminated the entire PDSO and DSO updates backlog on March 25, 2016.
- Since then, we have implemented a turnaround time of 10-business days to complete PDSO and DSO update requests.

MODERATOR:

- That's terrific news! I know we're all glad to hear it. Are there any recommendations we have for school officials to help keep the PDSO and DSO updates process on track?

MARISSA:

- Yes – first and foremost, always submit all supporting evidence up front, upon submitting the update in SEVIS. This will help schools avoid delays caused by missing information.
- Our second recommendation is to always submit PDSO and DSO updates separately in SEVIS. That way, the updates are not grouped with others that require a longer adjudication process.

TANDICE:

- And we want to take this time to remind viewers that SEVP has several free resources available on Study in the States and ICE.gov to help you better understand how to make PDSO and DSO updates.

MARISSA:

- Absolutely – we also hosted two webinars focused on the PDSO and DSO updates process.
- The SEVIS process webinar can be found in the SEVIS Help Hub, and the Ask the Experts webinar recording with our adjudicators is on the Stakeholder Webinars page.

MODERATOR:

- Yes, both webinars are located on Study in the States, and we absolutely encourage you to watch them again if you need a refresher. And, you guessed it, all of the links to those resources and webinar recordings are included in the Hyperlink Appendix.



Slide 13: Don't Forget ...

MODERATOR:

- Next up, we have some reminders and best practices that will help your school and students remain compliant with SEVP regulations. I want to focus on two things specifically. Tandice, can you remind us of some student travel best practices?



Slide 14: Best Practices – Student Travel

TANDICE:

- Sure! I know we talked about the new potential terminations for those who don't comply with the Form I-515A, but now let's talk about the positive side. We want to remind DSOs of how to help students prepare to enter the United States.
- Remind them to bring all necessary documents, to keep them up-to-date and to keep them safe while traveling. This will help students avoid being issued a Form I-515A.

MODERATOR:

- And could you remind everyone what types of documents SEVP recommends students take with them?

TANDICE:

- Yes – students should always keep:
 - An updated, signed copy of the Form I-20;
 - A current passport that is valid for at least six months;
 - A valid U.S. visa; and
 - Proof that they paid the I-901 SEVIS Fee on their current SEVIS ID
- They may even want to carry supporting financial statements and a school acceptance letter or proof of enrollment.
- DSOs – make sure that your students know to carry these documents on their person, and not in their checked luggage. We also recommend that you provide your students with an emergency contact number in case they have questions or encounter any issues.

MODERATOR:

- Those are helpful reminders. Is there anything DSOs should keep in mind when assisting their students with travel?

TANDICE:

- We do recommend that DSOs help their students understand the readmission process. This will help ensure that students returning from break or vacation don't encounter issues at a port of entry.



MODERATOR:

- It's definitely important for students to understand the admission and readmission process.
- So that was for students, let's jump to schools. What are some good reminders for SEVP-certified schools?



Slide 15: Reminder – Form I-17 Updates

MARISSA:

- Mainly, we want to give our viewers some reminders about Form I-17 updates in general.
- Most importantly, we want to stress how key it is to make regular updates. Your school's Form I-17 should always reflect the most current information, and keeping it up to date as changes occur will ensure your school remains compliant.
- Schools should also be mindful of regulatory time limits to submit updates. You can visit ICE.gov to find the SEVIS Reporting Requirements for Designated School Officials page.

MODERATOR:

- We definitely suggest that you guys check out that page, so we included the link to that page in the Hyperlink Appendix, along with links to a lot of other helpful resources on Study in the States and in the SEVIS Help Hub, including the Resource Library.

MARISSA:

- We certainly hope that you all find this useful. We want to give DSOs as much information as possible to help them keep their school's Form I-17 up to date so that the Form is ready for recertification when that time comes.

MODERATOR:

- Speaking of which, can you share any reminders you have for our audience about the recertification process?

MARISSA:

- The thing that is most important to be mindful of is your school's certification expiration date, or CED.
- SEVP sends schools a notice 180 days before a CED, and we suggest you begin working on your recertification package upon receiving that notice.
- Recertification may not be the best time to begin to make updates to your school's information, which is why it's important to make continuous updates as changes occur.



Slide 16: Facts + Figures

MODERATOR:

- Great reminder. Thanks, Marissa.
- Next up, we've got some facts and figures for you all. Tandice, could you share some details about SEVP's increased outreach efforts over the past year?



Slide 17: Expanding Outreach – Conferences

TANDICE:

- We have witnessed a record increase in our outreach efforts, specifically over the last two years on the conferences front.
- The pie chart on this slide illustrates the audiences we're working with most often. If you are part of an association type that isn't represented here, and you have upcoming events that you would like SEVP to attend, send us an email at SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov, and we'd be happy to further discuss the event.

MARISSA:

- And I just want to highlight here that we're working with our intragovernmental partners 25 percent of the time, both presenting with them and to them.
- We often work with other DHS agencies, like USCIS and CBP, as well as the Department of State.

TANDICE:

- And the final thing we want to point out on this slide is that SEVP participated in 173 events in 2015. That is more than a 260 percent increase in the number of events we participated in since 2013. We're always excited to further our relationships with our stakeholders, and want to continue working with new audiences.



Slide 18: Expanding Outreach – SEVP Field Representatives

MODERATOR:

- And speaking of that incredible amount of growth in outreach, if I'm not mistaken, SEVP's field representatives have played a big part in that effort.

MARISSA:

- That is absolutely true, Lauren. Since they began attending conferences in June 2014, field representatives have gone to over 100 events on their own.
- They are crucial to our expanded outreach, and have established strong relationships with numerous local and regional-level associations that SEVP would ordinarily not have been able to present to.
- We are so fortunate to have them out in the field, and they are clearly making a difference for their territories.

MODERATOR:

- Can't disagree with that – it also looks like they have conducted over 14,000 school visits since the four classes' respective deployments?

MARISSA:

- Yes, and that number will continue to increase in the coming months and years.



Slide 19: Helpful Resources

MODERATOR:

- That's amazing – they really are providing quite the extension of SEVP out in the field!
- We're getting close to the end of our presentation, but before we wrap it up, I know SEVP has a lot of free resources available to our viewers.
- I want to take a moment to explain our webinars. SEVP hosts two different webinar series, the SEVP Webinar Series and the SEVIS Webinar Series. Can you guys just clear the air on the differences here?



Slide 20: SEVP Webinars

MARISSA:

- First, under the umbrella of the SEVP Webinar Series, we have two types of webinars: SEVP InFocus and Ask the Experts.
 - The InFocus webinar, like the one we're hosting now, provides DSOs with the latest program news and updates.
 - The second type of webinar, Ask the Experts, focuses on topics in international education with participation from our in-house experts. SEVP's first Ask the Experts webinar was hosted in February 2016 and our adjudicators gave a status report on the PDSO and DSO updates process.
- Recordings and supporting documents for the SEVP Webinar Series are uploaded to the Study in the States Stakeholder Webinars page following each webinar.

TANDICE:

- In contrast, the SEVIS Webinar Series focuses on the latest SEVIS news, typically before and after a new release of SEVIS enhancements.
 - As part of the SEVIS Webinar Series, viewers can participate in moderated question and answer sessions.
 - Recordings for the SEVIS Webinar Series, as well as any supporting documents, are available on the SEVIS Help Hub.

MARISSA:

- And I do want to point out that last Thursday's webinar was a Special Report webinar.
- This and any future Special Report webinars are not part of either the SEVP or SEVIS Webinar series, but rather are one-off webinars that we produce when SEVP has news and updates it wants to immediately release to the public, rather than wait for the next SEVP or SEVIS webinar.
- Future Special Report webinars will not occur with any regularity, but we will certainly notify the academic community when SEVP schedules a Special Report.

MODERATOR:

- Thanks ladies for making that distinction.



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- Jumping back to the two webinar series, we've included links to the Study in the States pages that host both SEVP and SEVIS Webinars so our viewers can find recordings from the two series.
 - As a reminder, you can find the link to the recording of last week's webinar on the Stakeholder Webinars page on Study in the States.
 - Also, the next SEVIS webinar discussing SEVIS STEM OPT functionality is taking place on Friday, April 29, 2016, from 2 to 3 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.
 - Are there any other resources you guys would like to point out to our viewers?



Slide 21: New on Study in the States

MARISSA:

- SEVP has posted many new and updated tools to Study in the States.
- One new resource is the updated I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Tutorial.
- The new tutorial now includes instructions for the mandatory email address field on FMJFee.com, as well as additional information for payments made by Western Union.
- We encourage DSOs to send the link to prospective students to help them better understand how to pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee before attending their visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

MODERATOR:

- And what about the updated SEVIS by the Numbers map – that changed as well, right?

TANDICE:

- We didn't change the SEVIS by the Numbers map, so much as we added another dimension to visualize student data.
- Now, instead of just seeing numbers about countries of origin for international students, Study in the States users will be able to see where students are studying, with state-by-state breakdowns of student populations.
- So, basically you can see student data from a U.S. perspective!

MODERATOR:

- That sounds really cool, Tandice!



MARISSA:

- Another new feature is the Study in the States Resources Library.
- The library has 22 different infographics for students and school officials, including:
 - F vs. M status,
 - Reporting requirements for the Form I-20,
 - SEVIS tips for public high school DSOs, and
 - Other topics.
- Users can find specific resources by applying audience and topic filters.

MODERATOR:

- And DSOs and students can print those infographics at any time?

MARISSA:

- Yes, we've published them to print in both color and greyscale, so anyone who wants to print the infographics for reference should be able to do so, regardless of printer type.

MODERATOR:

- Well, I know those will certainly be useful for all of our viewers out there.
- And all those resources just mentioned are listed in the Hyperlink Appendix.
- Let's quickly cover the ways that our audience can continue to connect with SEVP – Tandice?



Slide 22: Engage with SEVP

TANDICE:

- We've got a lot of great resources available on Study in the States and our social media pages that will allow our stakeholders to stay informed about the latest news coming from SEVP.
- Some specific things that we want to highlight are the blog on Study in the States, which is updated at least three times a week with new posts, as well as the SEVP Spotlight and Conference Bulletin.

MODERATOR:

- And just a quick reminder, how can DSOs receive the Bulletin?

MARISSA:

- Just send an email to SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov and we would be happy to add you to our distribution list!
- You can also send event requests to the same email if your school, or any associations you are a member of, have upcoming events you would like us to participate in.

TANDICE:

- And finally, don't forget that we frequently post on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, so be sure to connect with us on those platforms as well!



Slide 23: SEVP Values Your Feedback

MODERATOR:

- Fantastic! As we get to the end of this webinar, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that we would love to hear your thoughts about this webinar, as well as any other events you attend where SEVP presents.
- Remember to take our Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey following this webinar so that we can continue to improve for future webinars!
- If you refer to your Hyperlink Appendix, there's a direct link to the survey in there.



Slide 24: SEVP Contact Information

MODERATOR:

- And finally don't forget that there are numerous ways to get in touch with SEVP.
- The SRC is open Monday to Friday from 8 am. to 6 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, except on holidays.

TANDICE:

- Yes, and we do want to note that the SRC currently has adjusted hours on Wednesdays for system maintenance.
- For now, the SRC is closed every Wednesday for a short period starting at 12:50 p.m., but resumes operations after 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

MODERATOR:

- Oh, thanks for letting us know, Tandice!
- And just a reminder to our viewers, you can always reach out to us via the email address you can see on your screen.
- Additional contact information is also available on the Study in the States Contact Us page.
- Well, I believe that just about covers it. Marissa and Tandice – thank you for enlightening us today, and everyone else – thank you for joining us.
- Don't forget to tune in to the SEVIS webinar about STEM OPT on Friday, the April 29 at 2 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.
- We look forward to seeing you all on Thursday – have a great day!